

# IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

**May 6, 2004, 9:00 a.m.-4 p.m.**

**NOAA Fisheries  
PORTLAND, OREGON**

## ***I. Greetings, Introductions and Review of the Agenda.***

The May 6, 2004, meeting of the Implementation Team, held at NOAA Fisheries in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Jim Ruff of NMFS and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The meeting agenda and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at [kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov](mailto:kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov).

Silverberg welcomed everyone to the meeting, led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

## ***2. Updates.***

***A. In-Season Management (TMT).*** Rudd Turner said TMT met five times in April and again yesterday; they have been discussing spill, flows and the implications of the declining water supply forecast, Mid-Columbia and Hanford reach operations and the McNary modernization test. One issue – spring spill at the collector projects – was elevated to IT; the issue was eventually forwarded to the Corps for decision. The Corps agreed to provide spill at Little Goose and Lower Monumental through April 23, and to provide 18 days of spill at Lower Monumental beginning April 23, Turner said. Spill started at the Lower Columbia projects on April 12. Daytime spill at Bonneville started at 50 Kcfs and was increased to 75 Kcfs; nighttime spill has been up to the gas limitations (BiOp and chum protection) downstream. Lower river flows have now increased such that it is possible to spill up to the gas cap; the end of chum emergence is today, and tomorrow night the Corps will begin to spill up to the 120% TDG cap.

Flow and water supply is another important issue, Turner said; the May early-bird forecast is now available, and the water supply is continuing to decline across the basin. We're now at 76% of normal at The Dalles, and 66% of normal at Lower Granite, said Turner. However, flows are coming up – the day-average flow was 79.1 Kcfs at Lower Granite yesterday, 226 Kcfs at McNary, 250 Kcfs at Bonneville – the highest day-averages we've seen at any of those projects this year. Snake River modeling shows we may already be near peak runoff in the Snake River, although we may see a few more days of flow at or about this level later in May, Turner said.

We have also been discussing Mid-Columbia flows, he said, with the understanding that the Corps does not control Mid-Columbia flows. The Hanford Reach fish protection operation got off to a rocky start this year, with a couple of days in which the flow bands were significantly exceeded. That situation is now improving, Turner said. We have been trying to manage Grand Coulee operations to meet the Priest Rapids flow objectives, he said; the plan now is to go to a 135 Kcfs weekly average flow at Priest Rapids beginning Monday, May 10. We are watching the Grand Coulee operation closely to ensure that we refill the project by June 30 while avoiding, if possible, low Mid-Columbia flows during refill in the month of June.

TMT has also been discussing the McNary modernization test, which involves the operation of four units outside 1% peak efficiency, Turner continued; project personnel saw some fish impingement and descaling problems on April 29, and the test was stopped. We agreed, at a coordination call yesterday, to re-start the test this Saturday, using only two units, said Turner; we'll run the test for two days and watch the monitoring information closely.

TMT also discussed Lower Granite operations, and the fact that fish passage is currently peaking at that project, Turner said. After the meeting, we agreed that the biologist on duty at the separator would inform the RCC when the next-to-last raceway was full; the operator would then open the RSW at Bay 2 and provide a small amount of training spill through 6 a.m. this morning. Part of the desire was to make this operation energy-neutral, so we reduced Bonneville spill somewhat from its planned levels – from 125 Kcfs, to 100 Kcfs – last night to compensate, Turner said. More than 823,000 fish have passed Lower Granite in the past 24 hours, said Turner; if we had not provided spill, that number would have been over 1 million. This is not considered spill for fish passage, Turner added.

What is the species composition of the fish arriving at Lower Granite, currently? Ruff asked. The majority are hatchery chinook, Turner replied. And where is the passage index at Bonneville? Ruff asked. In the 20,000 range, with significant volumes of spill, Paul Wagner replied. In response to a question from Bill Hevlin, Turner said the Corps is also watching the passage situation closely at Little Goose, to ensure that we don't see overcrowding at that facility. And will the Lower Granite RSW operation continue tonight? Ruff asked. It may not be needed, because passage numbers appear to be dropping off at Lower Granite today, Turner replied.

What was the basis for the 4 Kcfs training spill number? Ron Boyce asked, noting that the salmon managers are concerned that such a small amount of spill will not provide good

egress conditions. Also, he said, why does this operation have to be power-neutral, rather than fish-neutral? He noted that it was not the salmon managers' intent that spill at Bonneville would be reduced to provide the Lower Granite operation. Turner replied that it was not the Corps' intent to provide BiOp spill levels; it was simply to provide a small amount of spill to pass the fish that could not be collected and transported and move them through the tailrace. It's not a long-term operation, Turner said.

Bill Tweit said that, given the huge fish numbers currently moving down through the Snake, he would be more comfortable if he knew the Corps had a barge in place at Little Goose in anticipation of a sharp increase in fish passage at that project. It was agreed that the Corps will discuss operations at Little Goose with WDFW and NOAA Fisheries. Boyce added that he would like to see more discussion of the issue of revenue neutrality at that meeting. In response to a question from Tweit, Wagner said he has received an email from Grant County PUD explaining what happened during the "rocky start" to the Hanford Reach fish protection program this spring; Wagner said he will bring it to the next TMT meeting for discussion.

***B. System Configuration Team (SCT).*** No report.

***C. Water Quality Team (WQT).*** See Agenda Item 3 (below).

***D. TMDL Update.*** No update.

***E. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB).*** No update.

### ***3. Washington State Columbia River Initiative.***

Tweit distributed a handout describing the Columbia River Initiative, noting that he had first brought it to the group's attention about a year ago. The idea was to construct a management program for Washington State's permitting for water withdrawals from the Columbia; the state asked the National Academy of Sciences to look at this issue. That has now been done, and NAS has issued their report, said Tweit. About 45 days ago they released their pre-publication report; the final report will not be available for a couple of months. However, the pre-publication report has been through the full peer review process, and its scientific conclusions will not change in the final report. The State has also been studying the economic benefits and costs of Columbia River water withdrawals, Tweit said. With both of those pieces out, WDFW has been working with WDOE and the Washington Governor's office has been working closely together to develop a management framework.

Tweit spent a few minutes going through the contents of the Columbia River Initiative information packet he brought to today's meeting (Enc. C), touching on the economics of water withdrawals, the findings in the National Academy of Science report on the current state of science in the basin, and the NAS' recommendations (take no irreversible action, politicians must be willing to take risks, use adaptive management, explore water transfers and other market-based solutions, convene a joint forum to discuss environmental and other consequences of additional water withdrawals, no list of additional research needed – see Enc. C).

Tweit then touched on the major milestones in the development of the Columbia River Initiative:

- Senate Committee briefing – April 14
- Public event in the Tri-Cities – April 30
- Prepare draft rule – April 1-June 15
- File draft rule – July 21
- Formal public hearings – August 24-September 11
- Final EIS and cost-benefit analysis – mid-November
- Adopt and file final rule – mid-November-early December
- Effective date of rule – January 22, 2005

Moving on, Tweit provided an overview of the state proposal, which attempts to answer the following questions:

- What water is needed and when?
- Where will the water come from?
- How would the water be made available?
- What do we need to make the program work?
- How much will it cost and how long will it take?
- Where will the money come from?

Tweit touched on some of the impediments that remain in the initiative development process, including legal and social impediments. He noted that this is a science-based proposal; it won't be easy, he said, but we think we can make it work, in terms of avoiding some of the litigational pitfalls that have completely snarled the issuing of new water rights in recent years. In addition, it keeps the authority to make these kinds of decisions in Washington's hands. There is a long way to go before anything concrete comes out of this, Tweit said, but the process is underway.

The proposal to create a regional water use forum is intriguing, said Ruff – what level of detail did they provide in that recommendation, and would the State of Washington propose to include the Federal government and States of Oregon and Idaho in such a forum? There isn't a whole lot more detail in the NAS report, Tweit replied; we haven't yet thought through who would participate in the forum. However, if we regionalize it right off the bat, it might make such a forum too unwieldy. If we can develop a pilot program within Washington, that might be a better approach, at least initially. The NAS suggests that the Council might be one forum for those discussions, but the Council has a lot on its plate already, Tweit said. Our sense is, let's try it on a small scale, and if it looks like we can't get there on our own, or will be undermined, then we'll be more interested in pursuing a more regional approach, he said.

Ruff noted that the information packet says that, to make this program work, all withdrawals will need to be metered. That's correct, Tweit replied. I'm amazed that they aren't already metered, said Ruff.

Twit noted that the WDOE website has a “Columbia River Initiative” hot-button, through which the draft NAS report can be downloaded.

#### ***4. Revised Summer Spill Proposal.***

Ruff said this item was placed on the agenda by the Action Agencies in the event that the summer spill proposal was available for discussion; that proposal, however, is not yet available. Work is ongoing to identify the impacts of reduced summer spill, to examine potential offset measures, and to make sure the two match up, he said. There have been a series of collaborative meetings between the states, tribes and federal agencies to look at the impacts of reduced spill on listed fish; we have fairly good agreement that we have narrowed down the range of those impacts pretty closely, Ruff said. He distributed five documents (Enclosures D-H) summarizing the draft findings in this area. Ruff went briefly through the contents of these documents, asking the other IT participants to review them and come to the next IT meeting prepared to discuss this issue in more detail. We would like to set up a meeting to get any feedback you may have on our approach, methodology and assumptions, said Ruff – a number of you have asked for this information, and here it is. Ruff added that the reason the federal action agencies have not produced a draft summer spill proposal is that this is as far as we’ve gotten, and wanted to get more regional feedback before they proceed further.

Will we be getting any analysis of the impacts of reduced summer spill on non-listed species? Twit asked. Bonneville’s original analysis, which came out in January, included non-listed summer-migrating stocks as well as listed stocks, Suzanne Cooper replied. The question is, who will be the final arbiter of those impacts to non-listed fish? Cooper observed. That’s part of it, Twit agreed – the other part is whether there is a process for making those analyses public and reviewing them. Those analyses have been out for months, Cooper replied; we’ve taken comments on them, and discussed them in numerous Regional Forum meetings. However, you haven’t made much of an attempt to address the concerns that have been raised about the analysis of impacts to non-listed stocks, Howard Schaller observed. Ruff agreed that, in recent months, most of the analytical emphasis has been on listed stocks. Are you saying that you would like to have some further discussion of the impacts to non-listed stocks? Ruff asked. Yes, Twit replied – you have some expertise Washington doesn’t have, so we’re somewhat dependent on NOAA Fisheries to help us with that kind of work.

What we want to make sure everyone understands is that these draft analyses outline an approach to analyze the potential offsets (Enc. E), said Ruff – it is a draft for discussion, not a final draft. After a few minutes of further discussion, it was agreed that NOAA Fisheries would coordinate a special meeting to discuss these analytical proposals with the states, tribes and federal agencies.

Sharon Kiefer observed that the non-biological impacts of the proposed summer spill offsets – its effects on reservoir refill, for example – also need to be included in the analysis. Good suggestion – that information is available, said Ruff. Boyce said that, from Oregon’s perspective, the goal of this exercise has to be to reach agreement on both the impacts and the proposed offsets. Our goal is to get your feedback on the approach we’ve taken, and to discuss

whether additional information or analysis are needed, Cooper replied.

After a few minutes of discussion, the IT agreed to convene the meeting to discuss the summer spill analysis some time early next week.

### ***5. Discussion of NPPC's Engagement in the Regional Forum Under the Mainstem Amendment.***

Ruff said the Council's mainstem amendments address Regional Forum participation by the Council; he said he had been talking with Doug Marker of the Council staff about a Council initiative to formalize an executive committee for the Regional Forum. They have requested a briefing from NOAA Fisheries at the May 11 Council meeting in Walla Walla, said Ruff. We wanted to bring this to the IT's attention, he said, in case you have some opinions about whether and how this should happen. Marker distributed a memo describing the Council's ideas on this subject, noting that they flow out of the Mainstem Amendments implementation workplan (Enc. I).

Marker provided an overview of this document, noting that it briefly summarizes what the Mainstem Amendments say about the regional decision-making process. He emphasized that the concepts in the memo are his alone, and have not been discussed with the Council. Basically, what I wanted to say to the IT membership is that we are beginning to talk about this, and particularly for the IT's state representatives, this is an area where you may want to consult with your Council members, Marker said. We can then have a more detailed discussion of these concepts at the June IT meeting, once the Council has seen these proposals, he added.

Marker noted that, mainly, his memo lays out a potential approach to formalizing and regularizing the Executive Committee process. That is specifically what I want to check in with the Council members about next week, Marker said. And what can IT give you today? Silverberg asked. I'm not looking for a specific response today, Marker replied; again, I would prefer to come back at the June IT meeting to discuss it once the Council has had an opportunity to weigh in on this issue. In response to a question from Ruff, Marker said what he envisions is something that builds on the existing Regional Forum process, in particular, by adding regular and structured Executive Committee meetings among the senior management in the region. We'll add that topic to the June IT meeting agenda, Silverberg said.

### ***6. Next IT Meeting Date.***

The next Implementation Team meeting was set for **Thursday, June 10**. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.